MONTEREY NEWS

February 2022 Est. 1970
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Pick up at: the library (in and outside), outside town hall, transfer station

Lin Saberski captured this image when canoeing through the fog on New Year's Day.

Begin celebrating Monterey's 175th anniversary! Sledding, snow angels, and snowmen-making fun. We're also planning to have hot cocoa, cider, hot dogs, chili, and cookies, with a fire pit going.
Winterfest page 2

If you want winter to leave, make plans to put it to work for you. For years in our area people planned on having a "Winterfest" celebration.
A Text from the South page 17

I was very disappointed to read two letters published in the January 2022 *Monterey News* regarding the background of the town clerk.
Letters-Unprofessional Decision page 8

The *Monterey News* has long had four simple standards for any content to be published.
Letters-Editorial Standards page 8

This plan was not in the interest of health and safety for local citizens of other species, though, since many of them had lifestyles dependent upon a reliable lake level.
Missing the Muskrats page 16

Sometimes the truth of our being is communicated in an act of mutual trust, hands on feet clad in nylons, but nevertheless skin to skin, needing no words at all.
Swans Mate for Life page 10

It's 2022, and that means Monterey is 175 years old! Look at the "Save the Date" listing to mark your calendars about the events we've planned so far.
Monterey's 175th page 2

What I was holding in my hand was a piece of wood begun over three hundred years ago. It's almost all kindling now, which is one way to honor it to the very end.
Chestnut to Kindling page 19

Vaccinations: The Community Health Program's van will be at the community center , Thursday, February 3, from 1:30 to 3 p.m. Call (413) 528-0457 for appointment or just show up. All Covid shots available.

We look at what was "raised and appropriated" by the townspeople last year; what was actually spent; and what spending is anticipated for the coming fiscal year. While this seems fairly straightforward, I can assure you it is not.
Budgeting in the Time of Covid page 4

The Monterey Cemetery Commission, as caretakers of the Veterans Memorial Park, would like to join with the town to expand the project of the photos of the veterans that were in place at the memorial park.
Veteran's Photo Parade page 6

Upon first meeting me, people, noticing that I "talk funny," ask where I grew up. My answer is "Up in a fig tree, down under."
Native Plants page 14

It has been over six months since our ad hoc vaccination appointments support group finished helping people get vaccinated with first and second shots.
Letters-Vaccination Appointments page 9

Squirrels at work! —Maureen Banner

Monterey Community Center

We were fortunate to have two new instructors starting in January: James Boneparth, with super gentle yoga on the floor on Friday mornings, and Margaret Buchte with painting for adults on Saturday afternoons. Their classes are already underway but there is still room for newcomers in the Friday morning yoga, now at 10, with James.

Both of these classes are held inside the MCC, so you must be masked.

If you want to register for yoga, please call (413) 528-3600, or email calendar@ccmonterey.org.

Ping pong's starting time on Saturdays has been changed to 2:30 to 4:30 p.m., instead of beginning at 2 p.m.

Board games with Aldeth is on Sunday from 3 to 5:30 p.m.

MCC keeps extra N95 masks in the mudroom. If you come in for a program and don't have a good mask, please take one.

Thanks!

—Mary Makuc
MCC Event Coordinator

Outdoor Winterfest at the Community Center

Sunday February 20, 1 to 3 p.m.
Begin celebrating Monterey's 175th anniversary! Sledding, snow angels, and snowmen-making fun. We're also planning to have hot cocoa, cider, hot dogs, chili, and cookies, with a fire pit going. Paper lantern-making for kids. Bring your sleds and outdoor chairs.

If we are lacking snow and cannot sled or make snow angels, we will have alternative activities. Our website will have updates if we need to cancel, at ccmonterey.org.

The center will be open for bathroom use only.

—MCC Committee

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Monterey is 175!
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We've only just begun...

SAVE THE DATES

Sunday, February 20th
Community Center Winterfest
Tuesday, April 12th
Anniversary Commemoration
Monday, May 30th
Memorial Day Parade
Saturday, June 25th
Bidwell House Museum Country Fair
Saturday, July 30th
Book Sale & Steak Roast
Friday, August 5th
Community Contra Dance
Saturday, August 6th
Lake Fest

Monterey's 175th!

It's 2022, and that means Monterey is 175 years old! Look at the "Save the Date" listing to mark your calendars about the events we've planned so far. Note that the community center's Winterfest is coming up on Sunday, February 20. We are hoping to have some sort of commemoration around the date of incorporation, April 12th, though as of now this is Covid dependent. Otherwise, preparation for the celebration is coming along nicely. There's lots to look forward to this summer, and more to come. A number of individuals and organizations have stepped up and taken charge, for which we are so grateful.

In addition to our events, The Friends of the Monterey Library are compiling a special book to commemorate the anniversary and are looking for help. The specific roles that need to be filled for the project are Editor, Proofreader, Recipe Testers, Communications, Sales, Design (design experience not required), Production, Promotions, and Advertising. If you are interested, please email montereylibraryfriends@gmail.com.

There will also be a Knox Gallery exhibit celebrating the anniversary. See page 3 for Lauren Behrman's invitation to help with this.

Want to see something else? Or get involved in the planning process? There's still time and opportunities, so send an email to montereyis175@gmail.com.

—Nadia and Marya Makuc

Monterey's 175th!
Special Knox Gallery Exhibit

Monterey is having a birthday and you're invited to help celebrate!

The Monterey Historical Society, in collaboration with the Monterey Library, Bidwell House Museum, and the Monterey 175th committee, is pleased to announce that we will have an exhibit in the Knox Gallery at the library throughout the month of July to celebrate Monterey's 175th anniversary. The exhibits will celebrate the townspeople's history, primarily with artifacts and other items from the collections of the Monterey Historical Society and Bidwell House. We're just beginning to compile a list of potential exhibits and we'd like to include memorabilia from the Monterey community.

Please send us your suggestions for things you'd like to see in the exhibit.

Also, let us know if you have any items in your attics that could potentially be exhibited, such as interesting artifacts, vintage photos or postcards, artwork from the town, newspapers, letters, etc.

If you'd be interested in helping with the exhibit or other parts of the anniversary celebration, we'd love to hear from you.

Please send your suggestions, including images of items if possible, to Rob Hoogs (rhoogs@verizon.net) and/or Lauren Behrman (laurenbehrman@gmail.com).

Thanks. Help make Monterey shine!

—Lauren Behrman

PLAY GROUP

South Berkshire Kids Playgroup

Monterey Library

Thursdays, 10 to 11 a.m.
February 3, 10, 17, & 24

Join us for free play, storytime, songs and more!! Best for families with children ages birth to 5. This program is free and open to the community, no registration required.

SOUTH BERKSHIRE KIDS

MASSACHUSETTS Department of Early Education

Monterey's 175th!
With Dignity

We are working on a plan to have Dr. Donna Hicks share her "Dignity Model" with our town as we commemorate our 175th anniversary. She has most generously agreed to present to us virtually. Stay tuned for more information about her virtual talk as plans unfold!

Here is a quote from the foreword to her book, *Dignity: Its Essential Role in Resolving Conflict*, by the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

"This book is a must read for those who want to experience peace in their everyday lives and peace in the world around them. Without an understanding of dignity, there is no hope for such change. If you want to find the weak links in a democracy, look for where people are suffering. You will most likely see a variety of violations. If you want peace, be sure everyone's dignity is intact."

For more information or to collaborate, please email me at laurenbehrman@gmail.com.

—Lauren Behrman

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Berkshire Taconic Foundation
Eagle Fund and Janet's Fund

The board of governors of the Eagle Fund are happy to announce that the Eagle Fund and Janet's Fund grant application portal is now open through midnight March 1, 2022.

Since the Eagle Fund's inception in 1998, over $500,000 has been awarded to students, faculty, and community members for educational enrichment programs that benefit students in the Southern Berkshire Regional School District.

Janet Thieriot was a Monterey student in the Southern Berkshire Regional School District who pushed beyond the boundaries of the standard curriculum. She died of cancer in 1989 and her father, Bob Thieriot, established Janet's Fund to honor and perpetuate her spirit.

The overriding goal of both funds is to promote pride and enthusiasm for educational programming that fosters critical thinking through hands-on learning experiences.

Information on how to apply for an Eagle Fund or Janet's Fund grant can be found at the Eagle Fund's website at eagle-fund.net.

—Melissa Zdziarski
Berkshire Taconic Foundation

In My View
Budgeting in the Time of Covid

The Monterey budget season is upon us. For the uninitiated, this is the time when the town administrator, select board, and the finance committee meet with each town department, board, and committee to review their finances. Specifically, we look at what was "raised and appropriated" by the townspeople last year; what was actually spent; and what spending is anticipated for the coming fiscal year.

While this seems fairly straightforward, I can assure you it is not.

Even in non-Covid times, it is a considerable challenge to balance the need for growth with the desire to keep our tax rates affordable. This is why it is important to maintain a continual dialogue with each town department, board, committee, with the town administrator and each member of the finance committee and select board. You can understand why that is not often easy. Individuals typically have their own philosophy and expertise when it comes to the expenditure of taxpayer funds. Budgeting can be brutal. Just ask any past select board or finance committee member.

Covid makes budgeting twice as difficult.

During 'normal' times, the town administrator, select board, and finance committee can see trends in spending and requests. Covid interrupts this analysis. Some departments need to spend more to deal with the pandemic. Other departments have had to curtail their activities, temporarily. Since we do not know when the pandemic will end, we must keep funding to a level that addresses BOTH a long-term disruption in our town services, AND the ability to "go back to normal" when this is over.

There will be disagreements and hurdles. Jon Sylbert's boycotting finance committee meetings and John Weingold's boycotting select board meetings, complicates matters.

Regardless of these challenges, you can be assured that there is serious and careful consideration of our town finances by myself and Justin Makuc on the select board, town administrator Melissa Noe, finance committee members Michelle Miller and Katrina Fitzpatrick, and the town's departments, boards, and committees.

Monterey has consistently distinguished itself as a fiscally healthy town, with one of the lowest tax rates in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The current budget work will seek to continue this tradition.

Stay tuned.

—Steven Weisz, Chair
Monterey Select Board

Editor's Note: In My View *provides individual select board members an opportunity to communicate their thoughts about town affairs—reflections, opinions, and updates on topics of their choice. The views expressed are solely those of the writer, and are not meant to reflect the views of the full select board.*

Council on Aging
February News

Free Covid Test Kits

The US postal service is delivering one shipment of four Covid tests per residential address free of charge. To receive these tests, go to usps.com/covidtest, and enter your name, address, and email to request your shipment. If you do not have access to the internet or need assistance requesting your test kits, please contact Emily Hadsell through her line at town hall,(413) 528-1443 ext 112.

February Wellness Clinic Canceled

The council on aging would like to remind you that the wellness clinic will unfortunately not take place in February due to the demands of Covid. Our nurses, Amy and Jill, plan on the clinic returning in March, unless the high numbers of Covid cases continue. The council will keep you informed as this unfolds. However, please take note that there will also be a change in procedure. In March and going forward, those who plan on attending these clinics will need to call the Monterey Council on Aging at (413) 528-1443 ext 247 to indicate their interest. We strongly suggest that you do this as soon as possible for each month.

Movie Night

This month's movie night will be Tuesday, February 8, at 7 p.m., in the Monterey Library. The film is *Lala Land*, a musical romantic comedy-drama about a jazz pianist and an actress who fall in love, all while trying to manage the stress of their careers. As success mounts, the two face decisions that may jeopardize their love affair. Masks are required, Covid restrictions maintained.

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Parkinson's Support Group

Our council-sponsored Parkinson's support group continues to meet on the first Thursday of every month (February 3), from 2 to 4 p.m., in the Monterey Library. The January meeting was very successful, with information shared about exercise, and then time for caregivers and those with Parkinson's disease to meet in separate groups. All are welcome. If you would like to attend, please call the council at (413) 528-1443 ext 247.

Monthly Meeting

The council will have their monthly meeting on Monday, February 7, at 10 a.m., in the town hall. All residents, whatever your age, with interest in the council activities, are welcome to attend. Covid restrictions apply.

—Lin Saberski, chair
Emily Hadsell, outreach coordinator

Quilt Panels in Town Hall

Editor's Note: Maggie Barkin was in town hall recently and noticed these quilts (at left). Pinned on the wall between the quilts is an article written by Laraine Lippe, which was published in the Monterey News *in the June 2014 issue, much of which is reproduced below. The project was first mentioned in the February 2010 issue, so the quilts represent several years of cooperation between Dr. Ruth Engo (at right) and folks in Monterey.*

The next time you visit the Monterey Town Hall, we hope you will have a good look at two beautiful quilt panels that now grace the wall opposite the mailboxes. These quilt panels feature pictures painted by AIDS orphans during an African Action on AIDS workshop in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and reflect each child's vision of "A World Without AIDS." The paintings (more than sixty in all) were brought to Monterey back in 2007 by Dr. Ruth Engo, president of African Action on AIDS, during her first visit here.

During that visit Dr. Engo expressed the wish that she would someday like to make a quilt from the paintings she had just carried from Cameroon to Monterey. It was her wish that sparked the idea for the Vision of a World Without AIDS Quilt and gave birth to the collaborative effort between a group of African children who had lost their parents to the AIDS epidemic and a group of Monterey women (now known as Monterey Meets Ngalla). With a grant from the Monterey Cultural Council, two Monterey residents, Kathie

Frome and Joan MacVicar, designed and sewed together the quilts that you will see. (By the way, these are only two of the original seven quilt panels that Kathie and Joan created! Three of the panels are now in Cameroon, and one of those panels may be finding its way into the National Museum in Yaoundé.)

It is our hope that the quilts hung in town hall will serve as the springboard for a lasting relationship of mutual enrichment between Monterey and the network of villages served by African Action on AIDS, and as a reminder of our interconnectedness with the global human community.

—Laraine Lippe

Editor's Note: To learn more about African Action on AIDS, go to africanaction-onaids.org/.

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Fill the Veterans Memorial Park with A Photo Parade

The Monterey Cemetery Commission, as caretakers of the Veterans Memorial Park, would like to join with the town to expand the project of the photos of the veterans that were in place at the memorial park last Memorial Day.

We are looking for photos of Monterey veterans both past and present, preferably an 8"x10" which can be digitally sent to Melissa, or a hard copy can be dropped off at the Town Hall. The hard copy will be returned to you in its original condition. Along with the photo, we would need the name, branch of service, and any other details you may have about their time served.

Please spread the word to all veterans and families of past veterans. We would like to include as many of those who have passed on as possible.

If you have any questions, please contact Melissa Noe at Town Hall, (413) 528-1443, ext.111, or email admin@montereyma.gov; or Linda Thorpe at (413) 429-7156 (cell), or (413) 528-0148, or email montereythorpe@gmail.com.

We ask that you get the information to us no later than April 1.

Thank you,

— Melissa Noe, Town Administrator
Linda Thorpe, Cemetery Commissioner

Getting the Monterey News

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Have it mailed free of charge.

Receive it via email.

The *News* has been financed by voluntary contributions for over fifty years without a subscription.

Contact the *News* at MontereyNews9@gmail.com. P.O. Box 9, Monterey, MA 01245

Bidwell House Museum
Winter Lectures

The museum is closed for the season and temperatures were downright arctic in January, but there is some light in the darkness—the Bidwell House Museum Online Winter Lecture Series! Beginning later this month, with the first of three online lectures planned through the end of March, we are sharing stories about the Indigenous Peoples of western New England.

Wednesday, February 16: First up is Jesse Brushac at 7 p.m. Jesse is a traditional storyteller, musician, and Abenaki language instructor. The focus of his presentation will be on the ongoing language reclamation work being done by Abenaki people across Ndakinna, their home land. In addition to sharing the history of this work, he will share the language in a traditional context through several bilingual traditional stories and songs using the drum, rattle, and Native American flute.

Wednesday, March 9: At 7 p.m. we will present Dr. Lucianne Lavin, Director of Research and Collections at the Institute for American Indian Studies. Her talk will focus on the Mohican presence in northwest Connecticut. Early European documents demonstrate that Mohican tribal homelands extended east and south into what is now Connecticut, with known villages reported in what would become the towns of Salisbury, Sharon, and Canaan. The documentary evidence reveals stable, peaceful, social and political relationships between Mohicans and Housatonic Valley tribal communities to their south, particularly the Schaghticoke (a.k.a. Scaticook).

We will have details about the third lecture in this series in the next issue of the *Monterey News*. Registration is required for these lectures and can be completed on the museum website at bidwellhousemuseum.org/events. The Zoom details for the events will be sent via email a few days in advance.

Saturday, February 12: If outdoor activities are more your pace, then come for a snowshoe hike led by Rob Hoogs on the Bidwell trails at 10 a.m. The hike will be between one and two miles and last one to two hours depending on conditions. Hikers should bring their own snowshoes, poles, and dress in layers. This program is limited to fifteen people and pre-registration is required. Parking is limited so car-pooling is encouraged. If there is no snow on February 12, the program will change to a guided winter hike along the Bidwell trails.

Finally, In December the museum's annual appeal mailing went out to all members and donors. If you did not receive a letter but you are interested in making a donation, please call the museum or head to the museum's website, bidwellhousemuseum.org/donate. Every dollar donated supports the preservation of the historic 1760s homestead, 196-acre grounds, and history education programs. And don't forget the grounds of the Bidwell House Museum are available right now, every day, dawn until dusk! Hike the trails, take a leisurely walk or go snowshoeing on a snowy afternoon.

— Heather Kowalski
Executive Director

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Above- Phil Knoll, Apollo*, Graphite, watercolor, color pencil on paper, 24 x 24 inches*
Right- Sue Muskat, Coil*, Acrylic on panel, 48 x 36 inches*

Monterey Artists Showings in Great Barrington

Sue Muskat and Phil Knoll
Monterey artists Sue Muskat and Phil Knoll are also exhibiting this month in Great Barrington.Their work is included in the Winter Group Show at the Bernay Gallery (bernayfineart.com) on Main Steet. This exhibition featuring the work of ten artists and runs through March 6. Sue and Phil have both exhibited several times at the Knox Gallery and also help curate and install the recent exhibition of work by Geoff Young. Sue and Phil have both exhibited widely and have been the recipients of grants and residencies. They have also worked together to curate numerous shows locally and in NYC. Visit bernayfineart.com to see fantastic images and learn more about Sue and Phil's artwork, as well as the eight other artists represented in the show.

Julie Shapiro
Horizon Within, a three-person show opening from 3 to 5 p.m. on February 5, at Carrie Chen Gallery in Great Barrington, features Monterey resident Julie Shapiro's recent work.

All humans are influenced by our environments. *Horizon Within* highlights these artists' practice of synthesizing their unique visions through the lens of the landscape.

On first glance, it may not be obvious that Shapiro's abstract paintings, prints, drawings, and collages reflect her surroundings in Monterey. However, while considering her unique exploration of material and color, the viewer might discern the overlay of growth, the color of foliage, the light filtered through trees in the woods, everyday experiences that strike her in the familiar geography. She often describes her work as that of an explorer—always working to discover the hidden, behind the veils, films, and layers in her work. The effects are complex and engaging.

Shapiro was born in Stockbridge, and largely grew up in Santa Monica, CA. Her BA is from University of California, Santa Cruz; her MFA was granted by Yale. Before settling in the Berkshires, she was a tenured professor at SMU in Dallas, TX, and has subsequently taught and lectured at many other colleges, universities, and workshops. She exhibits widely and is a frequent recipient of grants and artists' residencies.

Shapiro actively, generously contributes to the community of Monterey: she co-founded and co-directs the Knox Gallery and is active in the Friends of the Library. We all benefit from her largesse!

Please enjoy Shapiro's work, and that of the other exhibiting artists, before Horizon Within closes on February 27, 2022. Carrie Chen Gallery, 16 Railroad Street, Great Barrington. CarrieChenGallery.com.

To learn more about Julie Shapiro and see more of her work, see julieshapiroart.com.

—MaryPaul Yates

Two of Julie Shapiro's pieces hung in the Horizon Within *show.*

Thai Yoga Bodywork

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Letters
An Unprofessional Decision

I was very disappointed to read two letters published in the January 2022 *Monterey News* regarding the background of the town clerk. I can understand the two writers' desire to cast doubt about Ms. Walker's veracity in the minds of the townspeople because, as you stated in your note, they have both been named in Ms. Walker's complaints. They, or somebody, spent a lot of time and effort making public records requests, and searching through newspaper archives to find out these things about Ms. Walker. What I feel is unprofessional is the editor's decision to print the letters during an investigation into those issues.

What the *Monterey News* has done is to set a precedent that I believe it may regret in the future. From now on, can we expect anybody in town with a grudge to search through someone's background, or hire someone else to do it? If someone believed that the *Monterey News*, for example, was being somehow unfair, and they or their agent dug through the backgrounds of the editor and the board to find any dirt they could, would you publish those findings if you believed them to be accurate? That is the door you have opened by publishing those letters.

I do not know the details of what happened in other towns to bring about the complaints from Ms. Walker there. I didn't witness the incidents so I will not comment on them. Any incidents which may have occurred in another town are not an issue in the investigation anyway. Usually, harassment and bullying of an employee takes place in private so it is a he said/ she said situation. On one occasion in Monterey, I was a witness to the bullying, demeaning, and yelling Ms. Walker detailed in one of her complaints. It is not a way any of us would like to be treated. At that time, I did not write a letter to the editor and name the antagonist. I wrote an email to the select board explaining what I saw and heard at the time, and requested that they take action. They did not. In terms of transparency and full disclosure, I should state that the only reason I was able to witness that interaction is that I work for the town a few hours a week in the town clerk's office. I was with the town clerk in her office following a meeting of the select board. It was then that the incident took place. I have not released any of the information about the incident, because I believe that wouldn't be fair to the parties involved. I wish the *Monterey News* used similar restraint.

—Gary Shaw

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Letters
Editorial Standards

I appreciate Gary Shaw's letter, "An Unprofessional Decision" concerning the two letters printed last month (page 10), one that referenced complaints written by Terry Walker in previous positions, and a second pointing out that two previous positions were missing in her resumé to the town. I am not surprised that some people might have been upset by these letters. I'm glad that someone took the time to register disapproval. One of my principal objectives as editor is to encourage community conversation, and it follows that it might not always be friendly. Critical to the value of Gary's letter is that he does not engage in a personal attack, but rather is focused on the decision point.

He points out that there is "an investigation into those issues." The information in the two letters, while they concern Terry Walker, are not matters of concern to the current investigation (as I understand it). Gary included a comment based on an incident he witnessed, "It is not a way any of us would like to be treated." This was a carefully worded perspective concerning a matter that is under investigation, also without interfering.

Standards

The *Monterey News* has long had four simple standards for any content to be published. The subject has to have some relevance to Monterey, the language must not be profane, the information must be truthful*, and the text must not engage in *ad hominem* attacks.

The last standard can be difficult to assess. A simple way to think of *ad hominem* attacks is basically as name-calling, regardless of how cleverly written to seemingly avoid the perception of attacking a person's character.

To be clear, this does not preclude information that may be challenging to a person's behavior or past. It is this distinction that led my decision to print the two letters. The information in those letters was truthful based on public documents.

*In Terry Walker's response she insisted that the referenced complaints were "fifteen to forty years ago." The complaints referenced were dated 2001 to 2011.

I offered alternatives to her inaccurate statement, which she did not accept, so I let it stand because the exact dates were on the same page for the readers to see. I could not edit out that statement without her approval, and I did not want to reject her entire response over that error.

Professional and Personal

Gary Shaw regards the decision to publish as "unprofessional."

A difficult aspect as editor is being mindful of my personal opinions which should be immaterial to decisions I make as editor. These two letters are a good case in point.

When I received the first iteration of this information, I personally didn't want to see it in the paper. I thought this information about previous complaints and missing employment information was unnecessarily provocative, it seemed unlikely the select board would act on it, and not likely to help the current situation in town.

But my job as editor is not to make decisions based on what I would personally prefer to do with information. I do not have control over what people send to the *News*. I am not in charge of town politics, or community conversations. My responsibility is to provide the opportunity for anyone to speak to the town. It has been suggested that publishing those letters was ignoring what is "good for the community." While almost everything folks send in clearly benefits the community, it is not up to me to decide what information should be withheld for the "good of the community."

Gary Shaw's criticism illuminates exactly why this is so. This question about what should be published is itself valuable. I might not have written this essay were it not for his letter, even though the decision to publish those letters involved literally dozens and dozens of communications with various parties and consumed my attention for three weeks during December. It was personally very stressful, but it could not be avoided.

Greeter or Gatekeeper

One spring evening in 2014 I got a call from a friend. "Would you be interested in becoming the editor of the *Monterey News*?" The question could just as well have been if I'd like to be an astronaut, or sail solo around the world. Totally unexpected, unimagined, zero credentials. While I brought some skills to the task, I'd never done anything remotely similar to this before. I didn't sink, but I was just barely floating for a long time.

Will March, the outgoing editor, leaving after fifteen years, passed along a few key practices during my brief training, one of which was, "Be a greeter, not a gatekeeper." And I have tried to hold fast to that. I am a relentless greeter. I almost rush out into traffic to draw people into the paper. If you tell me you've been collecting bits of string your whole life, I'm going to ask you to write about it for the *News*.

But being a gatekeeper is a much more fraught task. The *News* has a long history of not publishing editorials. It was one of the things I brought up when I was being interviewed, saying unequivocally that I will not write editorials. For the *News* to engage in editorials favoring one view over another, or pushing an agenda, would be to divide the community. Similarly, I think to permit only selected information judged to be "good for the community" could have the same impact.

I am learning as I go, and I look forward to more opportunities to do so (hopefully with less stress). I want readers to know that fair and clear criticism is a benefit to me personally, and to the entire community. I thanked Gary personally for his letter, and am publicly doing so now.

— Stephen Moore
Editor, *Monterey News*

Letters

Vaccination Appointments Group

Hi folks!

I am realizing it has been over six months since our ad hoc vaccination appointments support group finished helping people get vaccinated with first and second shots. I compiled notes from emails and phone calls with everyone in the group (including Roy Carwile) about our efforts. I can report back that we helped at least 238 people. We made appointments for many of these people. Others just asked for information and made their own appointments, and some we referred to the mutual aid Covid groups in other towns. We assisted people from Monterey, Lee, Becket, Sheffield, New Marlborough, Great Barrington, Sandisfield, Otis, Pittsfield, Richmond, Lenox, and Tolland (all over Berkshire County).

Many thanks to Adam Chait and Fiber Connect for the phone system.

I'm glad we didn't give up on our efforts despite the frustrations with technology and the state appointment system. Many people are still appreciative of our help.

— Mary Makuc

Letters

The *Monterey News* welcomes letters on a wide range of topics. Commentary on events and town affairs, notes of appreciation, or alerts for upcoming activities that might be of interest to Monterey readers.

Submit your letters to MontereyNews9@gmail.com, or mail them to PO Box 9, Monterey, MA 01245. Please include your full name and contact information.

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Here's a Thought...
Swans Mate for Life

Almost a century ago, a little girl was born into a family who was part of a group that the mainstream culture referred to as ugly ducklings. But as she became aware of that attitude, a little place deep in her heart told her she was really a swan.

That truth grew as she grew. She left home to study music education at a college in Ohio. When she was nearing graduation, the first school system where she was to student teach refused to place any ugly duckling in one of their schools. This soft-spoken, determined young woman student taught elsewhere, finished her degree, and continued her education at the Music Conservatory in Boston.

Money was tight for her there. To make ends meet at first, when she wasn't in class or studying, she cleaned house for her landlady. After a few months, she found a job that both paid better and was less strenuous. One day a friend set up a blind date for her. When the man picked her up for that date, she was less than overwhelmed. As she wrote later, he was so short, and not very impressive.

He, on the other hand, knew a swan when he saw one. He also knew she was the woman he wanted for his wife. As she got to know him, her natural reserve softened. She realized his life's purpose and his awareness of his own swan nature matched her own. He was fun to be with, too. They fell in love and dated for several years before they married, a common practice at the time. Their June wedding was held in his home church, and they took their vows deeply aware that swans mate for life.

Valentine's Day is a perfect day to remember that swans mate for life. It's also a perfect day to remember that, delightful as they are, love is more than romance and chocolate. Hallmark cards notwithstanding, isn't love —for another, or for ourselves—a relationship built on the dedication to another's, or our own, well-being?

As their family grew, she nurtured their little ones, taught them how to swim in formation, how to navigate dangerous waters. Her husband's work led him to guide and counsel groups of grown-ups about their own swan nature. People responded to the truth he taught. More and more flocks of swans began to gather. Others who were raised to expect to be swans, but who also recognized that beauty in others, swam in to join them.

She, too, was a guide and counselor beyond their family nest. Her role and his had become mirrors of the same intention reflected in the waters around them. Their work, their lives, became more public and more dangerous. And even as they grew, each struggled with remnants of the ugly duckling labels they'd had to overcome. Though the waters around them were muddy, and sometimes their marriage was, too, they grew in wisdom, each in their own way. She was frightened, but they were in this stream together, and swans mate for life.

There were others who feared that large flocks of swans gathering together, growing vocal, growing louder, might eat all the grain growing in the others' fertile fields. Hardened in that fear, some decided those swans needed to be put back in their place, reminded they were really only ugly ducklings. One morning a shot rang out. Her swan husband's wings folded and he fell to the floor. Swans mate for life and his life was over.

Her shattering grief was not only for herself, for her children, but also for the flocks of swans across the nation and the world, for by this time her husband had become a prominent, newsworthy figure. But swans know that love is stronger than death. In its season, her intimate sorrow now deepened her commitment to the more public aspects of the work they'd shared. She began to make her mark on the world, in her husband's name and in her own right.

I met her about ten years after her husband was murdered. She was in New York on business for a few days and, since it was December, she'd also pick up a few things for her children's Christmas. I was working in a small gift shop in Manhattan that sold a wide range of handcrafted goods and toys from around the world, the shop where she decided to do her shopping. The buzz of excitement the staff hid behind our veneer of professionalism became electric when late in the afternoon we heard what we'd been waiting for. "She's here!" someone whispered, and the in-house grapevine wriggled into life. "Coretta Scott King is here!"

She strolled through the shop, asked about this item and that, picked things up, put them down, reserved, deliberate, gracious to everyone. When she put the well-crafted but inexpensive items she'd chosen on the counter in front of the cash register where I stood, I was touched not only by her elegance, but also her apparent exhaustion. We spoke briefly, I asked if she'd found everything she wanted, and then I surprised myself. Actually, I surprised both of us. Words spilled from the bottom of my heart.

"You look tired," I heard myself say. "You could come into the office for a few minutes and sit down. I've been trained in foot reflexology. If you like, I could massage your feet."

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After the briefest pause she smiled and said yes. Once in the manager's office, she settled into a comfortable chair, slid her coat off her shoulders, and took off her shoes. We chatted some while I worked on her feet, and she closed her eyes for a bit and relaxed into the silence. After a while, she sat forward again, stretched, thanked me, and said it was time for her to go. We said goodbye. I watched her move gracefully through the shop and out the door. And I swear she had more spring in her step than when she walked in.

There are as many ways of speaking the human truth of our shared swan nature as there are people. Sometimes it's held in contempt, and spoken of in fear, or envy. Sometimes it's spoken of in celebration, awe, gratitude; other times tentatively, with a fluttering of hope. Sometimes the truth of our being is communicated in an act of mutual trust, hands on feet clad in nylons, but nevertheless skin to skin, needing no words at all.

—Mary Kate Jordan

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Stacy, Mark, David, Cindy, and Michael Andrews. Photo by Amelia Oleander in June 2021.

Cindy Andrews Remembrance

Editor's note: For the January issue I had downloaded Cindy's published obituary and then her husband Mark provided me with one written just for the Monterey News *which included Cindy's connections to the Berkshires and Monterey. I apologized for having published the wrong one and asked Mark to resubmit the Monterey version, which is below.*

Cindy Jane (Rubenstein) Andrews had just begun her life as a Monterey resident on July 1 after years of searching, purchasing property on Sylvan Road, planning, building, and ultimately moving here with her husband Mark, fulfilling a lifelong dream to live by a lake in the Berkshires. Sadly, she passed away on December 20 at the age of sixty-four after a courageous sixteen-month battle with acute myeloid leukemia. Cindy was an extremely positive person who, throughout her illness, looked on the bright side. When there were no more options, she accepted her future with courage and grace.

Cindy was born in Paterson, NJ, in 1957, and while growing up spent many summers at Camp Ramah in the Berkshires on the New York side. In 1970 her family moved to Mendham, NJ where she met her future husband, Mark, in high school. In 1983, they were married and moved to Long Valley, NJ, and then later to Bridgewater, NJ, where they raised three wonderful children, David, Stacy, and Michael.

Attending Falcon Ridge Folk Festival in Hillsdale, NY with the kids every summer was a big part of their blossoming love of the Berkshires, along with many times visiting western Massachusetts. It seemed like a perfect place for their "third act." Cindy was always an involved, energetic, and caring person who will be missed and remembered by everyone she touched.

A full obituary about Cindy's life and who she leaves behind is available at birchesroyfuneralservices.com where condolences may be left. A memorial service was officiated by Rabbi Jodie Gordon at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire on Thursday, December 23, followed by interment at Ahavath Sholom Cemetery (located in Elmwood Cemetery) in Great Barrington, MA.

—Mark Andrews

Faces*, by Charlotte.*

February at the Knox Gallery

We are pleased to present *Expressions of Recovery: Work presented by members of the Gould Farm Community*, which opened on January 28. The exhibit features paintings, collage/mixed media works, and photographs created by current and former program participants. Accompanying written materials elaborate on the lived experiences of Gould Farm community members, who are adults with mental health and related challenges.

Creating art has many therapeutic benefits; sharing creative activities and enterprises fosters self-confidence and inspires others in their recovery goals. The exhibit's organizers believe that this collaboration between the Knox Gallery, Monterey Library, and Gould Farm works to reduce the stigma around mental illness by inviting viewers to see the artists as complex human beings with many strengths. They further express their desire to "highlight the creativity, talent, and diversity of the Gould Farm community beyond the guests' identities as adults with a mental health diagnosis."

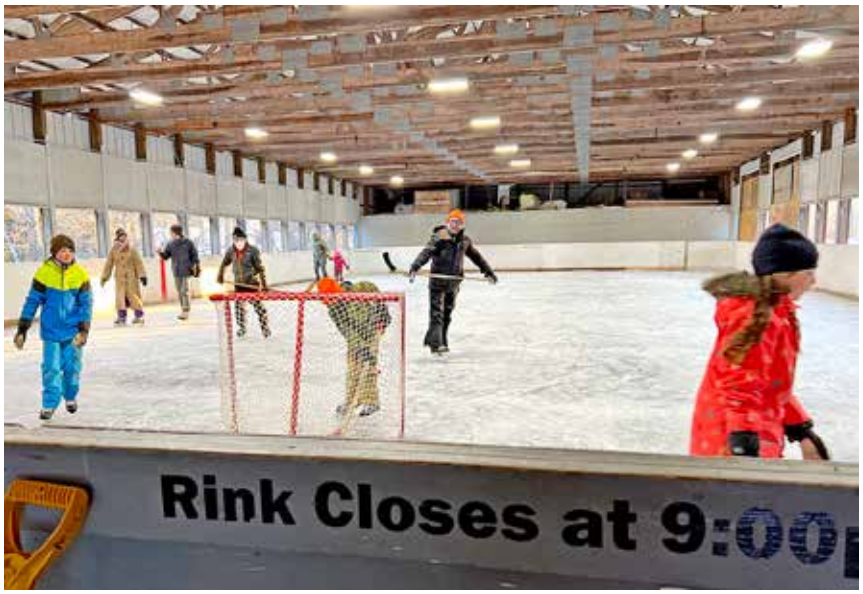
Above: Search*, by James Boneparth.*
Left: Untitled*, by Mark Murray.*

Gould Farm resident "guests" are offered diverse opportunities to aid their recoveries and advance their goals. Visiting artists and volunteers inspire guests with painting sessions, pottery instruction, and writing. Some guests pursue creative work independently. In the summer of 2021, a grant awarded by Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation's "Arts Build Community" initiative, with funding from the Barr Foundation, allowed Gould Farm to host two visiting artists. The focus of the first workshop was on handmade books, some of which are included here.

Expressions of Recovery: Work presented by members of the Gould Farm Community will be on view through March 5, 2022.

All Knox Gallery events are admission free. Exhibits can be viewed during library hours (see back page of this issue). Please visit the library website for current Covid restrictions, such as admission scheduling. Knox Gallery, Monterey Library, 452 Main Road, Monterey, MA, 528-3795; MontereyMassLibrary.org/Knox-Gallery; Facebook.com/KnoxGallery.

—MaryPaul Yates



Lin Saberski

After the Blizzard

Out walking on this shrouded day
you try to think these fields were green
the wooden way you try to say
the names of faces long unseen.

And when the sun stood wide and high
and dusty brooks and clocks ran slow,
you wished a mourning dove would sigh
that fall was on its way, then snow.

Though now the storm has passed and snow
winks like someone in disguise
from a sunny tuft, you know
the world too soon is otherwise.

—Don Barkin

Bob Cutick

Carey Vella and Catherine Hurst making waffles rink-side for the opening day on the skating rink.

Catherine Hurst's post on the Monterey-Google group announcing her treats lured us out despite the 5° temperature. As you can see, the same was true for many others. And boy were those waffles worth the bundling up and extra gloves—fresh and warm from Catherine's waffle iron, light, crisp, and delicious. Catherine said this was the first time she has done this in Monterey—we are hoping for many repeat performances!

—Lin Saberski and Bob Cutick

On the Common

Make way for ducklings, they might say
Children's books and crowds,
rainbow bikers and cat-tails,
off the rejected highway.
And also the goose, geese, goslings,
odd and even, in pairs and groups,
shoes on and off webbed feet.
Subways, freeways and music
call to the return
from jubilee to reality

—Sara Rappaport

Lin Saberski

A leaf trapped under the rink's ice.

Mystery Solved

One day the Monterey-Community Google group lit up with folks wondering who built the snowman at the Veteran's Memorial Park at the corner of Blue Hill Road.

Virgil Stucker, who lives up Blue Hill Road, wrote in: "Our wonderful grandchildren Tiegen and Maddox did that! I think they knew we all needed to smile and offer good cheer to people coming into Monterey!"

Photo by Susan Clapp

Native Plants
What is all the Fuss About?

Upon first meeting me, people, noticing that I "talk funny," ask where I grew up. My answer is "Up in a fig tree, down under." The so-mentioned fig tree was a very, very old Mortan Bay Fig in my neighbor's back yard. Inhabited by the neighborhood kids, this tree sheltered, fed, and hugged us. Its trunk and boughs were huge, relatively smooth, with the lower ones relatively close to the ground and thus best for climbing. And tree climbing was what we did. The club house was a huge hollow in the trunk, about six feet off the ground, hidden by the tree's huge leaves and thus our secret. When hungry, we simply reached out for the abundant, fragrant, thirst quenching, and absolutely delicious figs. Here our childhood friendships were private and nurturing.

The other noticeable inhabitants remaining in my memory of said fig tree were the most beautiful caterpillars, there in abundance. They were Emperor Gum Moth caterpillars, pale green with spikes tipped with brilliant blue, orange, and red. We simply coexisted with these stunningly beautiful creatures, not giving them a lot of thought, but careful not to touch them. We recognized that they spun cocoons but gave scant attention to what happened next.

In the world of landscape design, the term "spirit of place" looms large. As children, we do not have a conscious understanding of this, but "our place" leaves an indelible impression, informing our attitudes to the physical world around us be it urban, suburban, or rural.

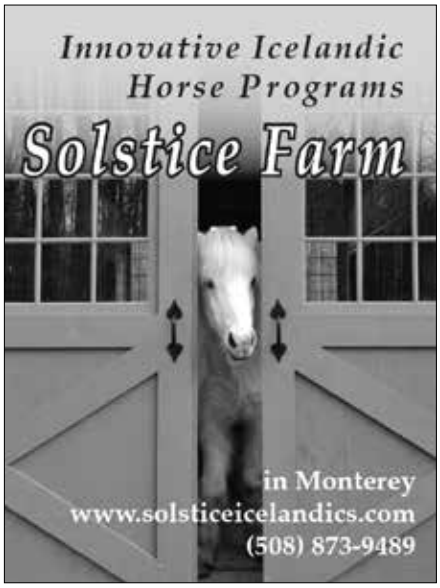
Childhood trips to the mountains north of Melbourne introduced me to the unique temperate rain forests of Australia. As a child, I fell deeply in love with these forests, this habitat, this ecological niche of southeastern Australia. I don't remember much about the forest floor, except for watching out for snakes, all poisonous — and with no anti-venom available at that time. But upward was a heavenly umbrella of feathery tree ferns standing ten feet above us. Way, way up beyond was the forest canopy of eucalyptus, some of the tallest trees in the world, equaling the height of American sequoias. The bird calls of these forests reverberate in my memory. The scent of eucalyptus is what I dearly miss in thinking of my homeland that I left as a young adult.

But what of native plants in the here and now? Why have they become such a crucial issue?

Coming to Monterey in the late 70s after ten years of living the city life, I could not wait to start gardening my own land. I quickly realized the extent of my ignorance of this land, this specific place: the wide range of temperatures through the year, the soil that becomes frozen during winter months, the plants that can and cannot grow here, the trees with trunks so thin and in leaf less than half the year, with the rest of the year gray, brown, and white. I had to learn a whole new vocabulary of plants and gardening. I was faced with a totally different environment: the habitat of the northeastern deciduous forests.

I then realized that the gardens I had seen in the suburbs around New York City were very different than those of my childhood in Australia and those I had seen during my three years living in England. I also realized that gardens are designed purely from the point of view of people, ignoring the needs of all other living creatures in those environs. The gardens I was seeing around New York derived in style from the pastoral ideals of English gardens of the eighteenth-century British aristocracy. "Gardens" were parklands of lawn, with some specimen trees accenting these open spaces. Flowers were confined to specific, geometrically defined flower beds. Pastoral scenes included grazing animals who were apparently free to the viewer from the mansion, but in fact contained by the "ha-ha," the hidden ditches.

In very general terms, American garden style has derived from this idea of the expanse of lawn bordered by trees at the perimeter as "the garden." Much attention is given to the maintenance of these lawns. The saying that "Dirt is simply matter in the wrong place" could



slip sideways to "Weeds are plants in the wrong place." Americans tolerate no weeds in their lawns and go to great chemical length to eradicate them, as they do with all insect life inhabiting their lawns. Good gardening practice also has urged us to be tidy gardeners: dead head the flowers and cut all summer flower growth back to the ground in the fall. In doing this, we eliminate seeds as a food source, and the lingering summer plant growth as winter habitat and protection for both insects and birds.

There is one very big problem here for the maintenance of the local habitat: Insects play a vital and specific role in the food webs of diverse habitat ecologies. DougTallamy is a leading entomologist and ecologist who has researched and written extensively on garden practices in America, and, most importantly, how the monoculture of lawns has played a large role in the degradation of healthy habitats by interfering in interconnected food webs.

Tallamy has researched how loss of native flowers has reduced the populations of pollinators, which in turn reduces the populations of birds and small mammals in an ecosystem, and which has further repercussions going on up the food chain. He documents in detail, for example, which birds eat which caterpillars, emphasizing that caterpillars, along with other insects, are a crucial component of birds' nutritional needs and of their ability to reproduce.

He has written extensively on reintroducing a diversity of native plants in our gardens to create more resilience to climate change. Any habitat with well established native populations of plant, insects, and animal life will be far better equipped to buffer the effects of coming changes.

Gardens take time to grow, as do gardeners. We are a small group of people in Monterey who are growing in our experience with and knowledge of plants in this ecological niche. We also hope to grow in number of interested neighbors in this endeavor.

For that reason, the Monterey Native Plants Working Group is hosting a Sunday afternoon talk (on video) by Doug Tallamy on February 6, entitled "The Little Things that Run the World." It will take place at the community center as long as it seems safe, otherwise online. Following the talk, the group will discuss the idea of making Monterey a "pollinator-friendly community," as Great Barrington and other nearby towns have already done. The Berkshire Conservation District is supporting this endeavor, and our local group wants to inform members of the community about the process and get feedback about it. For details, and to register, kindly email Julie Kern, jfmakern89@gmail.com.

—Elizabeth Wolf
Monterey Native Plants Working Group

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Contributions in January

Bonner McAllester & Joe Baker
Bob Cutick & Lin Saberski
Alyssa Gelbard
Howard & Pat Nourse
Glenn Heller
Nadine Cohen
Tom Mendelsohn & Julia Gittleman
Kay Purcell
Lela Reynolds
Hillel Maximon

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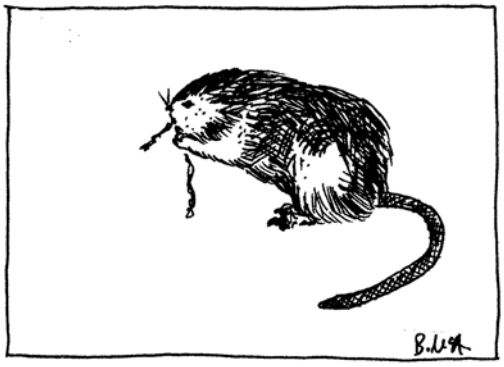
Missing the Muskrats

Near the public beach in Monterey there lived a woman who enjoyed watching muskrats swimming just out from her house. This was Helen Shaw, and when the local powers that be decided to adopt the practice of "drawdown" for Lake Garfield, Helen protested. The original pro-drawdown argument was about flood control. We had a new dam out there and if there were to come a winter with lots of snow pack and then a sudden spring thaw, rain, and runoff, that dam might give way and threaten public health and safety downstream. The new dam was designed with a standpipe and a gate and a plan to drop the water level every year in the fall so if we got a big spring melt, the dam would not be stressed.

Of course the site was engineered also with a big broad spillway beside and bypassing the dam, capable of taking quite a load of water down to the Konkapot, so the lake level would not crest and breach the dam. Still, drawdown looked easy and made doubly sure the lake would never flow over that earthen dam and wash it out.

This plan was not in the interest of health and safety for local citizens of other species, though, since many of them had lifestyles dependent upon a reliable lake level. One of these was the musquash, or muskrat, a big rodent related to voles and lemmings.



Some folks, when seeing a muskrat swimming along in a lake or pond, think this might be a small beaver. I always take a closer look at the tail design if I am in any doubt. Beavers have a big flat one with which they can loudly smack the surface as a warning. Muskrats have a long slim tail, flattened from side to side, rather than "dorso-ventrally," like the beaver's tail. It makes a good rudder and can be used also for sculling, to propel the muskrat along. Otherwise, the muskrats pump with their hind feet, the way beavers do. Beavers have big hind feet with strong skin webbing between the toes. Muskrat hind feet are not really webbed, but there is stiff bristly hair growing between the toes which makes them good paddles.

Over the decades of drawdown, muskrats have sometimes come back into Lake Garfield. Thanks to tributaries with resident beavers for engineers, there are some small ponds not affected by the changing water level in the main lake. Any muskrats in these places may live in what is called a pond lodge, or they may be dug into the bank in tunnels or bank dens, which can be ten to fifty feet long, with underwater entrances, two or three chambers, and interconnecting passages.

Muskrats mate in March and give birth to a first batch of babies after a month. These kits weigh less than an ounce at birth and are blind and naked. But in a couple of weeks their eyes are open, they have some fur, and start nibbling vegetation. They can already swim and dive, and are weaned at four weeks.

Sometimes muskrats will give birth to several batches of youngsters in a season, with as many as six in each one. The reason our beaver swamps are not overrun with them is not because they range so far from the home place, but because they make a good meal for pickerel, pike, snapping turtles, raccoons, foxes, bobcats, hawks, owls, otters, and mink. Mink will prey upon adult muskrats, too. One naturalist investigated a mink's den in a hollow ash stub, about six feet off the ground. Inside there were thirteen freshly killed muskrats, two mallards, and one coot.

There was a time when muskrats were also preyed upon by folks, both for their hides and for their meat. I have an old book that says back in the day, muskrat meat was sold in shops as "marsh rabbit." The fur was trimmed and dyed and made to look like seal fur, even labeled "Hudson seal." This was good for marketing back in the day, and American trappers "harvested" and sold more than ten million muskrats in a year. The money was good and people got advice from the USDA about muskrat management. How to make the wild wet-

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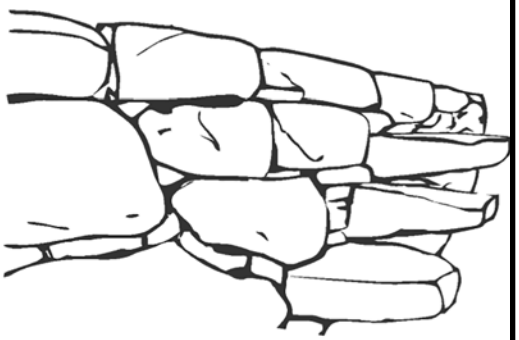

Hind foot of a muskrat, 3"

lands particularly "productive" of so many wonderfully warm furs, ready to pass off as seal in the coat industry.

Fortunately for the muskrats, and many another creature, Congress passed the Fur Products Labeling Act in 1951. We could still manage the wetlands to favor muskrats and then kill them off to make into coats, but we had to call a muskrat a muskrat. Now all that work in the swamps was not so well rewarded. No more interest in maintaining certain water levels to keep the muskrats happy. Some folks moved on here to flood control and dropping the water level.

In Monterey, years went by, the flood control idea faded from memory and lakeshore property owners decided that drawdown was intended to protect docks and boathouses from ice damage in winter. Also intended to make repairs to pilings and moorings easy, now that the shallow parts of the lake were exposed.

And the next thing you know, we now believe that drawdown is really all about killing off pondweeds. So, stay posted for new reasons why drawdown is good for us, how it is saving our lake.

If Helen Shaw were still with us, she would be shaking her head over the choices we have made and the consequences. She would say, "Once there were muskrats here." I know someone who used to say Helen Shaw was "the Muskrat Lady." She gave him a piece of her mind. He was the man in charge of opening the gate every year to let the water level down and then closing it again in February, letting the lake fill up again. He said, with a grin, he did this as a Valentine's Day present for Helen, but I doubt she knew about this. It was a joke, and she would not have bought it for a second. She missed the muskrats.

—Bonner McAllester

A Text from the South

We received a message recently from my wife's cousin in Georgia:

"Your weather is down here in our yard drunk! We're gonna need to have you come get it and take it home."

We replied:

"Sorry about that, it has been all over the place lately. We've heard it has been causing havoc all over the southern states. It likes to leave snow and ice wherever it goes. Unfortunately by the time we get there it will probably have sobered up and left all on its own. Whatever you do—*don't feed it!* If you feed it, it tends to settle in and make itself comfortable for a while. It likes moisture, especially slightly warmed moist air and low barometric pressure. *Don't give it any!* It will take a long time for it to sober up and leave if you do.

"We tend to lean towards the practice of putting a lot of woodsmoke in the air to make its visit more tolerable. If you want it to leave, make plans to put it to work for you. For years in our area people planned on having a "Winterfest" celebration. Among the activities planned were sledding, skating, skiing, snow sculpture, ice carving, ice fishing, drinking hot chocolate and hot cider, along with other beverages (some "fortified" to help ward off the cold), and hockey. Nearly every year when the time rolled around for "Winterfest," the weather needed for it left. Weather you can count on is becoming increasingly hard to find and this appears to be true of winter weather as well. This is the best advice we can offer you at this point.

"In the meantime, we will try to get together a care package of snow shovels, tire chains, sleds, and ice skates. Try to enjoy its visit, soon it will be in the 90s and humid." —Your northern relatives.

—Lyman Thomson

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Snowy Owls-Arctic Visitors

The seasonal reports of appearances of snowy owls in early winter gets our undivided attention with all the environmental concerns about global warming and the effects on annual bird migrations. The population of snowy owls has already declined to about 200,000 in the northern hemisphere, with only 40,000 left to migrate down here in early winter. Since the last heavy migration in 2013 there has not been a huge influx of these snowy visitors. Early speculation was that this influx was due to a shortage of lemmings, their favorite food. A diurnal snowy owl, hunting by day and night, lives on about five lemmings per day, or more than 1,600 a year.

Ornithologists visiting the Arctic found that owl nests that year were overflowing with leftover dead lemmings. This changed the thinking for the reasons of the massive departure in 2013. It was not a shortage of lemmings, but rather there was such a food abundance for young owls that the owls were overcrowding their habitat. This led to the young owls being hassled by their parents and other owls, pushing them to move out of their usual territory and migrate south in record numbers. This surprising increase in migration, as in 2013, is referred to as an "irruption."

The snowy owl is a high profile visitor as the largest owl on the continent, with a wingspan of at least five feet and weighing up to six and one-half pounds. The female is normally larger than the male, and has lined markings all over its body, as opposed to the nearly all white plumage of the male, as in my illustration that my daughter Elizabeth helped me draw while a snowy owl was sitting in a pine tree a few miles from my house in Fairhaven. Their piercing yellow eyes are fixed in their heads to see only in one direction, forcing it to swivel its head around to allow their excellent hearing to follow audible movements, which this individual did as we were trying to get a closer view.

We have seen snowy owls frequently stopping to perch on our coastal landscape which is very similar to bleak northern tundra habitat, and similar to areas on Cape Cod, Crane and Salisbury Beaches, Plum Island. Recently at Logan Airport one was injured in traffic but could not be saved by conservationists.

The females make their nests by digging a shallow hollow in the ground, laying more eggs when prey is abundant. For a period of time after the eggs hatch the male brings her a wide variety of food consisting of mammals, birds including ducks and geese, fish, and various carrion.

The snowy owls (*Bubo scandiacus*) are fearsome creatures when defending their nests or young. They have been seen going after predators like ravens, foxes, wolves, and actually divebombing interfering human beings. Conservationists now recommend giving snowy owls plenty of space because when disturbed their movements become noticed by heckling crows, eagles, and crowds of people, which can then threaten their safety. Leaving them alone as stately sentinels from the tundra helps to preserve a wildlife-watching opportunity for future generations.

—George B. Emmons

Editor's Note: In February 2017 and again in February 2020 George submitted columns about snowy owls, but each column has had a different focus and information, and distinct original artwork.

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Letters

"Monterey Big Year"

Dear townspeople of Monterey,

I am working on an exciting project and hope folks in town might help.

I am attempting a "Monterey Big Year." In birding language this just means seeing and hearing as many birds as possible in one year. I have changed the usual rules to limit my "Big Year" just to the town of Monterey. I began January 1, and have been able to observe twenty-nine species so far.

I am not simply interested in listing birds. I have spent many hours this January walking and hiking during below-zero temperatures, bundled up, with fingers numb, making observations. Birds are incredibly resilient, braving the cold weather, hunting for feeders, scraping the snow, and prying open conifer cones. They fill me with delight.

I have read Bonner's column in the *Monterey News* about owls seen and heard, but sadly they have eluded me every year.

If you would like to help with my "Monterey Big Year," please contact me. All nature enthusiasts welcome!

Email me at pbanducci@gmail.com, or call me at (413) 645-2035.

Sincerely,

—Pauline Banducci

Centuries-Old Chestnut to Kindling

Janet Jensen's articles and program on the American chestnut have raised my awareness, and led me to discover something.

I love really well-split kindling. I've been preparing split-down kindling since my late twenties. I spent twenty-plus years running my commercial woodworking business in Vermont which provided piles of cut-off hardwood to split down for starting or rekindling two woodstoves that provided all our heat. I still split on the same round from a dead elm tree I cut in the early 80s (elm is extremely hard to split), and a solid steel hand axe my father gave me when I entered Boy Scouts at eleven years old.

We had an old bureau from Wendy's family. She's pretty sure it came from either her mother's great-grandmother, or perhaps her even greater-grandmother. Not a piece of great beauty or value, but

Stephen Moore

Wendy holds dear all her family things. We had it in the attic over my shop for a decade and we went to get it out for use in our new addition three years ago. Nope… mice all through it, pee-stained drawer boxes, yuk. So I put the drawer boxes in an open air shed, and we put the case out in the garden, like a garden desk, which proved to be really great. But three years in the open weather and it was totally falling apart.

So, because I reduce everything from

Cont. on page 21

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Twenty-nine Species seen since January 1

Lake Birds
Canada Goose
Mallard
Hooded Merganser
American Black Duck

Woodpeckers
Hairy Woodpecker
Yellow Bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker

Others
Purple Finch
House Finch
Evening Grosbeak
Brown Creeper
American Robin
Cedar Waxwing
House Sparrow

Hawks
Red-tailed Hawk

Feeder Birds
Dark-eyed Junco
Black-capped Chickadee
Northern Cardinal
American Goldfinch
Tufted Titmouse
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Mourning Dove
Blue Jay

Farm Birds
Rock Pigeon
Eastern Bluebird
European Starling
American Crow
Common Raven

The combination of wind, snow, and ice formed a very textured surface on Lake Garfield by January 9. Very different than on New Year's Day. (See the front page.) *—Photo by Lin Saberski*

February Wildlife Report

Foxes, Birds, Bobcats and More

Lin Saberski writes that she and Bob are still visited by that yellow-bellied sapsucker, a bird not really expected in these parts until early spring. And in the first week of January, Wendy Benjamin and Mayra Rodriguez saw a bear still up and about, at their neighbors' compost pile.

Anna Poirier is seeing her lone red-breasted nuthatch, every day, and I wish we saw some, too. Anna sent a wonderful photograph (above). Suzanne Sawyer writes that they are seeing more of these small nuthatches lately, also some large raptors she thinks are red-tailed hawks. The Sawyers have seen two coyotes walking through the yard, and I have heard about bobcats from Alice Berke and from Anna Poirier on New Marlboro Road. Anna writes that the bobcat walked through the backyard, headed for a neighboring field. She describes a "muscular cat in his grey winter coat. And those eartips!" Anna has also alerted us all to the presence of about twenty black vultures in downtown Great Barrington, "flying and gathering on rooftops and chimneys." Black vultures are quite different from the usual turkey vultures we have always seen in these parts. They are smaller, they fly differently, and their tails are "stubbier." Also, their heads are black, not red.

I heard about a bald eagle seen by Sue Thomson crossing Blue Hill Road and then Virgil Stucker put a note and a wonderful photograph (above right) onto the Monterey-Community Google group, about a bald eagle right at his place. He lives on Blue Hill Road.

Also, Steve has been seeing fox tracks all around his place, and he and Wendy have taken some good photographs of these. In one you can see the fox was nosing into the

Wendy Jensen

snow, probably following up on the scent of some delicious smaller creature. (Two photos below.)

Here, our local fox has revealed herself to be a female in estrus and our young dog Rocky is more interested than ever in this news. I don't say he is looking for a girlfriend, I just say this is a new bulletin he has received, today, one which is obvious even to me because it is a red sprinkle in the snow where she has urinated. So the seasons circle around.

Speaking of red traces in the snow, Bob Carlson noticed some of these, but not associated with foxes. The "winterberries," or black alders, by a beaver pond off Mount Hunger Road were stripped of their red berries and not far away there were red stains in the snow. Since then I have heard from a friend whose holly bushes bore many red berries. Robins have come and feasted on the berries, then leaving red stains in their droppings. These black alders or winterberries are in the same genus as holly: *Ilex*.

Alice Berke writes that there are juncos roosting under her porches, and Steve Moore and Wendy Jensen have seen a flock of bluebirds along New Marlborough Road and then on Wellman Road, too.

Also on Wellman Road, Wendy and Steve discovered an ash tree with many flakes of its grey bark scattered all over the ground, even across the road from the tree. The remaining bark, where the flakes had

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been removed, is a very different color, tan and quite smooth. This is a marked contrast to the grey ridges we are used to seeing on a mature ash. A little reading, also attending Richard Greene's presentation on BEAT Green Drinks January 18, gives some clues that when ash bark is harboring the larvae and pupae of the emerald ash borer, woodpeckers will know all about it and come pulling off the outer layer of bark to get at the morsels underneath. These borers are not way down in the tree, so they make easy pickings for the hungry birds. Steve writes that from one day to the next there was about a peck of new bark chips from this tree all over the ground and the road.

As we start cutting down all the ash trees we can find, in the name of controlling the potential for borers around here, we might think of the woodpeckers. Also of the many uninfested and healthy ash trees in our town.

Steve Moore sent in some photographs of a porcupine that is perhaps elderly, and certainly injured and not faring well this winter. The poor thing is limping badly and has a large bald area, with some odd white protuberances on the skin. Neither Steve nor I know what to make of these, but we fear this wild neighbor is unlikely to recover. In one photograph (above right) the porky has tucked its head against some willows, for strategic protection, with its well-armed rear end and tail directed towards the danger

And now that we are thinking about insects, I wonder about the larvae spotted by Bruce Wilkins on the ice near his place.

Bonsai Cox sent in one of Bruce's photographs (below) and I am sure it is not an emerald ash borer--but what is it? Some other marvel new to me, and unexpected on the ice in January. There certainly is a story here. I will have more about this creature next month.

Thank you for all your stories.

—Bonner McAllester
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Kindling, *cont. from page 19*

shop waste, construction cut-offs, etc. into kindling, I took apart the drawers (all aired out now) and cut everything down to five-to-six-inch-long bits, which I then split. Parts of the drawer boxes were a hardwood—the sides and backs, and the drawer fronts. When I cut one of the 3/4" x 4 3/4" drawer fronts in half, I saw very fine annual ring spacing. I realized, after hand planing a couple of pieces, that it was American chestnut, based on the graining and type of growth rings, the weight, and the smell of the fresh surfaces. It has a nice hard surface but less density than similar open-pored woods like red oak and white ash. (Other functional parts, drawer bottoms, backs, internal framing were made with what is sometimes referred to as "trade" woods… poplar, pine, and whatever was available for a best price.)

I kept one drawer front piece intact. It has eighty-five annual rings (they're so tight that I use a fine awl to make a prick every ten years—see photo on page 22), and the radius of the rings is nearly flat, which tells me that when the tree was cut it was probably already huge, and quite old. I pictured those trees in the photo from Janet's article in the November issue of the *Monterey News* where the lumberjacks were barely visible.

Here's what I've surmised. The bureau was probably made no more recently than the 1880s-90s. Very basic construction, a fair bit of rough handwork in assembly, hand-cut drawer box dovetails based on tool marks, and cut nails used for much of the structural assembly. The tree this drawer front piece came from was very likely a forest-grown tree. Forest-grown trees have to grow vertically very quickly, with less side exposure to the sun, and thus have tighter rings. It was probably at least double in age to the eighty-five rings I counted, and perhaps older than that. Also, this section of the tree's growth shows very consistent annual growth, which tells me that the environmental conditions were stable and favorable. I think this tree began its life in the early 1700s. This is just a guess. It's impossible to surmise beyond this without the whole tree being examined.

What I was holding in my hand was a piece of wood begun over three hundred years ago. It's almost all kindling now, which is one way to honor it to the very end. I'm going to

Cont. on page 22

MontereyMA.gov

Our town website is a great way to access information about the town.

— Steven Weisz, Chair
John Weingold and Justin Makuc
Monterey Select Board
(steve@montereyma.gov)
(johnweingold@gmail.com)
(justin@montereyma.gov)

For agendas and links to watch public meetings of towns and boards, go to the town website (above), select the board or commission of interest, and choose "Agendas" or "Minutes." Links for online viewing are listed in the agendas.

You can also search YouTube.com for more recent meeting videos. Search "Monterey, MA Board & Committee Meetings" and click on videos.

Town Contact Information

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Town Administrator:
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admin@montereyma.gov
(for town boards and misc. questions)
Assessor: 528-1443 x115
assessors@montereyma.gov
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(for questions about your tax bill)
Town Clerk: 528-1443 x113
clerk@montereyma.gov
Town website: Montereyma.gov, under each department, for office hours.

Stephen Moore

Kindling, *cont. from page 21*

save that piece and keep it with a piece of Sitka spruce I have. I did several kitchens in Sitka, which comes from the Pacific northwest along the Alaskan coast—beautiful wood, very straight, tight grain, nice yellow tint. The piece I've saved has more than one hundred annual rings in 3 1/2" of width. (I have to count this with a magnifying glass and a pin.) That is much like the piece of chestnut, except even tighter growth rings from a very large, old-growth tree. I realized then that I was offering to make kitchens out of this precious, irreplaceable timber. So I stopped selling it. I still have some long lengths that I've now had for probably thirty-plus years. I'll do something with them, but at least I'm not creating more demand for cutting these trees.

The only project I did with American chestnut, back in my early years as a woodworker, was to make a large church table. The church, in Rutland, Vermont, was rearranging, and planned to remove many of their front pews. I was asked to make the table to sit at the head of the center aisle using lumber from the pews, which as I used it I realized was chestnut. And I'm sure that with the scraps left over I made kindling.

But there was no conserving the old-growth American chestnut. It was by far the most valuable commercial timber for a long, long time. Folks didn't think in those terms when they could have, and then the chestnuts all died off in a massive blight.

— Stephen Moore

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Calendar

MCC- Monterey Community Center

Sundays: Monterey softball begins again. Batting practice at 10, games begin at 10:30 as weather permits.

Tuesdays:

Chair yoga with Connie Wilson, 10 a.m., library.

Bridge and cards, 1 p.m. MCC.

Wednesdays: Ping pong, 2:30 to 4:30, MCC.

Saturdays: Ping pong, 2 p.m., MCC.

Sunday, February 6: Native plants working group talk, "The Little Things that Run the World," 2 p.m., MCC. See page 15.

Monday, February 7: Council on Aging monthly meeting, 10 a.m. See page 5.

Tuesday, February 8: Movie night at the library. *LaLa Land* showing at 7. See page 4.

Saturday, February 12: Snowshoe hike led by Rob Hoogs, 10 a.m., Bidwell House Museum. See page 6.

Sunday, February 13: Games with Aldeth, 3 to 5:30 p.m., MCC.

Wednesday, February 16: Bidwell House Museum winter lecture with Jesse Brushac, 7 p.m. See page 6.

Sunday February 20: Winterfest at MCC, 1 to 3 p.m. See page 2.

Council on Aging Services

Parkinson's Support Group: First Thursdays (February 3), 2 to 4 p.m., library. See page 4.

Foot Nurse: Beverly Dunn is available for home visits. Call (413) 446-2469 to get an appointment. Council on aging covers $10 of her fee.

Wellness Clinic: The wellness clinic has been canceled for February. See page 4.

Transportation: For seniors and disabled folks to Great Barrington/ Pittsfield through the Great Barrington Council on Aging. Call (413) 528-1881. Forty-eight-hour notice required.

Safety Vests: Vests for walkers and bikers are available free at the town hall through the council on aging.

Monterey News

The *Monterey News* is an independent nonprofit corporation dedicated to fostering communication in the Monterey community. We invite signed letters, articles, drawings, poetry, and photographs. Submissions may be sent via email to montereynews9@gmail.com or to PO Box 9, Monterey, MA, 01245.

For advertising rates or other information, contact the Editor at (413)528-4007 or email.

Stephen Moore

The work is progressing on the store. The owners had no comment for the News.

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Contributions from local artists this month:
Maureen Banner, pgs. 2, 12;
George Emmons, p. 18; Bonner McAllester, p. 16, 17.

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